"A Message to the Alliance: Place Ukraine on a Path to NATO Membership"

Sixteen months have passed since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. As NATO prepares for its next summit – to be held in Vilnius in July 2023 – the Alliance must take further and more robust measures to address the Russian threat and support Ukraine. The good news is that Russia failed to defeat Ukraine, and the West remains united in supporting Kyiv. Moreover, Western assistance proved crucial in enabling Ukraine to defend itself and to be better postured in the coming months to recapture territory that Russia has illegally seized. But the ability of Ukraine to meet its war objectives, including its total territorial reconstitution, remains dependent on continued, if not increased, Western support.

Today, NATO is at a critical juncture in confronting Russian belligerence and establishing long-term stability, if not peace, in Europe. What halted the Soviet Union from expanding its influence and footprint during the Cold War was clarity regarding Western ability and its will to push back, in other words, to deter and defend. We believe that we need to return to a military posture that would clearly and unambiguously communicate to Russia the Alliance's capability and determination to defend its members, support Ukraine and its war objectives, and its determination to integrate Ukraine into NATO as a full member. We believe that three steps, which we discuss below, need to be taken to achieve this.

1. *The Alliance should clearly and unambiguously state that our goal is Ukraine's complete victory and the return to the territorial status quo from 2013, including Kyiv's sovereignty over Crimea.*

It is in the interest of the Alliance and the world that Ukraine unambiguously wins and that Russia leaves all the occupied territories. This will clearly communicate to all potential aggressors that hostility is not rewarded and does not pay off, which

is essential for European security and the stability of the international system. To fulfil this objective, NATO allies would be required to provide Ukraine with all means possible. This includes the deliveries of longer-range missiles capable of hitting the occupier's targets in Crimea and other parts of the seized territories, as well as fighter jets. Otherwise, an imperfect peace could, at best, mean a pause during which the aggressor gathers the strength to hit again. As we saw in Munich in 1938, appeasing the hostile actor only leads to a global conflict and world war.

It is in the West's best interest that Ukraine decidedly wins rather than merely survives. The restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity is essential to the maintenance of a rule-based international order. Russia is an aggressor who broke international law on numerous counts by invading Ukraine. The crimes committed must be investigated, and the perpetrators, including Vladimir Putin, must be brought to justice.

2. *Ukraine should be given a clear path to NATO membership, with its partnership status being immediately enhanced.*

Granting Ukraine's request for NATO membership is the most efficient and cost-effective way to bring stability to Europe's frontier with Russia. Anything short of membership communicates a lack of full commitment to Ukraine's security and sovereignty, and encourages Russia's hegemonic ambitions, as has been the case of the last three decades. Sustaining the security and economy of a Ukraine left outside the Alliance will require far greater expenditures and come in the form of security and economic assistance. This option would prove more costly than the credible extension of NATO's Article V security guarantee.

European peace and stability are directly linked to Ukraine's future as a NATO member state. Towards that end, the Vilnius Summit must, at a minimum, provide Ukraine with a clear path towards membership[1] Ukraine should also be invited to participate in the NAC meetings similarly to Sweden and Finland, who were invited following their decisions to join the Alliance. Additionally, the NATO-Ukraine Commission should be upgraded to a NATO-Ukraine Council, which will allow Kyiv to be fully integrated into many of the Alliance activities, and to participate equally with NATO allies. With this in mind, the Membership Action Plan should no longer be required as the next step towards Ukraine's NATO membership.[2]

The continuation of hostilities towards Ukraine cannot constitute the main rationale for a further delay of the accession process. This sends a signal to the belligerent that aggression is rewarded. Therefore, NATO should prepare to provide Ukraine with a formula whereby collective defence, as envisioned by Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, is extended to the entire territory controlled by Ukraine at the time of accession. After all, during the Cold War, West Germany was a member of the Alliance, although Bonn never accepted the division of Germany.

3. *NATO needs to adopt a full deterrence posture on the Eastern Flank. This should include significant investments in its multinational military presence and the prepositioning of strategic equipment. The Eastern Flank nations should provide an example by ramping up their defence efforts and making sizable investments.*

We are convinced that to avoid a war, NATO must return to a full deterrence by denial posture, substantially boosting allied presence at the Eastern Flank, both in terms of troops and equipment. Additionally, the NATO-Russia Founding Act must be declared as no longer valid. It belongs to a different era when NATO still hoped to establish cooperative relations with Russia. Continuing with its self-limitations today would be nothing less than appeasing the aggressor. Member states must also substantially ramp up their investment in defence. It is always cheaper to invest in deterrence than to finance a war - Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is a testimony to this. If, following the Russian annexation of Crimea, the West had responded with

robust deterrence measures, the invasion in 2022 may have never materialised.

Message to the Allies:

Throughout the Cold War, NATO provided the Allies with peace and security. This was only possible because the rhetoric of the Alliance was backed up with credible deterrence measures and an absolute clarity that NATO was ready to defend every inch of its Allied territory if faced with Soviet aggression. Today, it has become clear that in order to secure peace, NATO must return to the full deterrence posture.

1   Similar ideas were presented in the memo by Ian Brzezinski and Sandy Vershbow in the following memo: **https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/commentary/strategy-memo/memo-to-nato-leaders**

2   These ideas were presented and developed in the opinion peace by Kurt Volker: **https://cepa.org/article/grey-zones-are-green-lights-bring-ukraine-into-nato/**